## IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

KANI AMADOU MEITE

715 Eggleston Circle Sharon Hill, PA 19079

CIVIL ACTION

Plaintiff.

v.

No.:

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO. *d/b/a* SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

800 Essington Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19153

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Defendant.

## **CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff, Kani Amadou Meite (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff"), by and through his undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Plaintiff has initiated this action to redress violations by Southwest Airlines Co. d/b/a Southwest Airlines (hereinafter "Defendant") of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII" – 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000(d) et seq.), Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 ("Section 1981" – 42 U.S.C. § 1981), the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act ("PHRA"), and the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance ("PFPO"). Plaintiff was unlawfully terminated by Defendant, and he suffered damages more fully described/sought herein.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Plaintiff's claims under the PHRA and PFPO are referenced herein for notice purposes. He is required to wait 1 full year before initiating a lawsuit from date of dual-filing with the EEOC. Plaintiff must however file his lawsuit in advance of same because of the date of issuance of his federal right-to-sue-letter under Title VII. Plaintiff's PHRA and PFPO claims however will mirror identically his federal claims under Title VII.

## **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 2. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over the instant action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343(a)(4) because it arises under the laws of the United States and seeks redress for violations of federal laws.
- 3. This Court may properly assert personal jurisdiction over Defendant because its contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendant to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in *Int'l Shoe Co. v. Washington*, 326 U.S. 310 (1945), and its progeny.
- 4. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1392(b)(1) and (b)(2), venue is properly laid in this district because Defendant is deemed to reside where it is subjected to personal jurisdiction, rendering Defendant a resident of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
- 5. Plaintiff is proceeding herein (in part) under Title VII after properly exhausting all administrative remedies with respect to such claims by timely filing a Charge of Discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") and by filing the instant lawsuit within ninety (90) days of receiving a notice of dismissal and/or right to sue letter from the EEOC.

## **PARTIES**

- 6. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
  - 7. Plaintiff is an adult individual, with an address set forth in the caption.
- 8. Defendant is a major United States airline headquartered in Dallas, Texas, with terminals in several states (including Pennsylvania). Plaintiff was hired through and worked at Defendant's Philadelphia International Airport terminal with an address set forth in the caption.

9. At all times relevant herein, Defendant acted by and through its agents, servants and employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for the Defendant.

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 10. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
  - 11. Plaintiff is a black male from Africa (Ivory Coast).
- 12. Plaintiff was employed by Defendant as a ramp agent from in or about July of 2005 until his unlawful termination (as discussed *infra*) on or about October 2, 2018.
- 13. While employed with Defendant, Plaintiff was a hard-working employee who performed his job well.
- 14. Toward the end of his tenure with Defendant, Plaintiff and two black (African) coworkers,<sup>2</sup> Allie Fofana (*hereinafter* "Fofana") and Ope Molley (*hereinafter* "Molley"), were accused of violating Defendant's travel/guest pass policy.
- 15. For example, Defendant has a rewards program for employees which awards them travel/guest "passes," i.e. the right to "nonrevenue travel" based on employee attendance and work performance.<sup>3</sup>
- 16. Defendant allowed Plaintiff and other employees to have a certain number of travel/guest passes to use for themselves or for certain classes of relatives and friends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Allie Fofana and Ope Molley are from the African regions of Sierra Leone and Liberia, respectively.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Upon Plaintiff's information and belief, taxes are subtracted from the original recipient's paycheck before the original recipient is able to redeem or transfer the travel/guest passes.

- 17. Defendant has policies applicable to the misuse and/or abuse of employee travel privileges known as the Employee Travel Privilege Policies ("ETPP").
- 18. Defendant's guest pass policy prohibits the "confirmed sale or confirmed attempted sale of any type of nonrevenue pass."
- 19. Upon Plaintiff's information and belief, he, Fofana and Molley were targeted because of their race/national origin and Defendant's travel/guest pass policy was selectively enforced against them in a disparate manner.
- 20. For example, on or about September 26, 2018, Plaintiff was pulled from his ramp duties and informed by Defendant's management that Defendant's corporate representatives and management needed to meet with him immediately to discuss travel/guest passes.
- 21. Present at the September 26, 2018 meeting were Plaintiff; Defendant's Security Manager, Ann Marie Donalson (Caucasian, hereinafter "Donalson"); Senior Manager of Business and Operations Services, Robert Dusseau (Caucasian, hereinafter "Dusseau"); Security Investigator, Kayla Rolen (Caucasian, hereinafter "Rolen"); Station Manager, Merissa Kapelinski (Caucasian, hereinafter "Kapelinski"); and union representative, Emory Marshall (African-American, hereinafter "Marshall").
- Defendant was investigating travel/guest pass abuse and hostilely questioned Plaintiff as to whether he had ever loaned his supervisors or co-workers money and if his supervisors or co-workers had paid him back in travel/guest passes or whether he would consider travel/guest passes as payment for any loans he may provide to supervisors or co-workers.
- 23. In response to Donalson's aforementioned questions at the September 26, 2018 meeting, Plaintiff informed her that: (1) he did not purchase or sell any travel/guest passes; and (2)

any travel/guest passes given to him or his black (African) co-workers were gifts and were not considered payment for any loans.

- 24. Donalson also asked Plainitff if he knew that co-worker Jim Stewart (Caucasian, hereinafter "Stewart") was Plaintiff's "number one supplier" of travel/guest passes and questioned what Stewart "got in return" from Plaintiff. Plaintiff replied that he was not aware that Stewart was his biggest supplier and that Stewart gifted travel/guest passes to Plaintiff because they were friends.
- 25. After informing Donalson that Stewart had gifted him travel/guest passes because they were friends, Plaintiff advised Donalson to question Stewart as to why he provided Plaintiff with travel/guest passes to which Donalson replied, "we are talking to you."
- 26. Upon Plaintiff's information and belief, Stewart, a Caucasian co-worker, was never questioned for allegedly "selling" and/or gifting travel/guest passes to Plaintiff, and Stewart remained employed with Defendant following Plaintiff's termination.
- 27. At the conclusion of the meeting on September 26, 2018, Donalson provided Plaintiff with a notice stating that his attendance was required at a fact-finding meeting scheduled for October 2, 2018.
- 28. At the fact-finding meeting on or about October 2, 2018, Kapelinski provided Plaintiff with a memorandum that stated Defendant had concluded that Plaintiff was "involved in the buying and selling of Southwest Airline Guest Passes" and that his employment with Defendant was "terminated effective immediately." Defendant's management immediately escorted Plaintiff to retrieve his belongings and to leave Defendant's premises.
- 29. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that Defendant's purported reason for terminating him that he was involved in the buying and selling of Defendant's travel/guest passes

- is completely pretextual because (1) Plaintiff was a hard-working employee who performed his job well; (2) Plaintiff never bought or sold Defendant's travel/guest passes; (3) while Plaintiff contests buying or selling travel/guest passes, Defendant's ETPP prohibits only the selling or attempted selling of guest passes; (4) Plaintiff and other African employees were treated disparately because of race/national origin (as discussed *supra*); (5) upon Plaintiff's information and belief, Plaintiff's African co-workers, Fofana and Molley, were terminated for allegedly having committed the same or similar conduct for which Plaintiff was alleged to have committed and for which he was terminated, and (6) other Caucasian employees who have committed the same or similar conduct, for which Plaintiff was alleged to have committed and for which he was terminated, have not been questioned, disciplined, suspended, or terminated.

30. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that he was terminated because of his race/national origin.

# COUNT I <u>Violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII")</u> (Race/National Origin Discrimination)

- 31. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 32. During Plaintiff's employment with Defendant, he was subjected to discrimination and disparate treatment with regard to Defendant's policies and termination because of his race/national origin.
- 33. Plaintiff was abruptly terminated on or about October 2, 2018, for pretextual reasons.
- 34. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that he was terminated because of his race/national origin.

35. These actions as aforesaid constitute violations of Title VII.

# COUNT II Violation of 42 U.S.C. Section 1981 (Racial Discrimination)

- 36. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 37. During Plaintiff's employment with Defendant, he was subjected to discrimination and disparate treatment with regard to Defendant's policies and termination because of his race.
- 38. Plaintiff was abruptly terminated on or about October 2, 2018, for pretextual reasons.
  - 39. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that he was terminated because of his race.
- 40. These actions as aforesaid constitute unlawful discrimination under Section 1981. **WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:
- A. Defendant is to promulgate and adhere to a policy prohibiting discrimination and retaliation in the future against any employee(s);
- B. Defendant is to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff, and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendant's illegal actions, including but not limited to back pay, front pay, salary, pay increases, bonuses, insurance, benefits, training, promotions, reinstatement and seniority;
- C. Plaintiff is to be awarded punitive damages, as permitted by applicable law, in an amount believed by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendant for its willful, deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendant or other employers from engaging in such misconduct in the future;

- D. Plaintiff is to be accorded other equitable and legal relief as the Court deems just, proper and appropriate (including but not limited to damages for emotional distress, pain, suffering and humiliation); and
- E. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable attorney's fees as provided by applicable federal and state law.

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:

An R. Karpf, Esq. 3331 Street Rd.

Two Greenwood Square, Suite 128

Bensalem, PA 19020

(215) 639-0801

8

Dated: April 12, 2019

## IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

### CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

CIVIL ACTION

`elephone	FAX Number	E-Mail Address					
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639-4970	akarpf@karpf-law.com					
Date	·	•					
4/12/2019		Plaintiff					
		•	(X )				
•							
commonly referred to as	complex and that need specia	al or intense management by	( )				
In accordance with the Civil Justice Expense and Delay Reduction Plan of this court, counse plaintiff shall complete a Case Management Track Designation Form in all civil cases at the tin filling the complaint and serve a copy on all defendants. (See § 1:03 of the plan set forth on the reside of this form.) In the event that a defendant does not agree with the plaintiff regarding designation, that defendant shall, with its first appearance, submit to the clerk of court and service plaintiff and all other parties, a Case Management Track Designation Form specifying the two which that defendant believes the case should be assigned.  SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CASE MANAGEMENT TRACKS:  (a) Habeas Corpus – Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.  (b) Social Security — Cases requesting review of a decision of the Secretary of Health and Human Services denying plaintiff Social Security Benefits.  (c) Arbitration – Cases required to be designated for arbitration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.  (d) Asbestos – Cases involving claims for personal injury or property damage from exposure to asbestos.  (e) Special Management – Cases that do not fall into tracks (a) through (d) that are commonly referred to as complex and that need special or intense management by the court. (See reverse side of this form for a detailed explanation of special management cases.)  (f) Standard Management – Cases that do not fall into any one of the other tracks.  4/12/2019  Attorney-at-law  Plaintiff  Attorney for							
c) Arbitration - Cases required to be designated for arbitration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.							
(a) Habeas Corpus - Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.							
SELECT ONE OF THE FO	OLLOWING CASE MANA	GEMENT TRACKS:					
plaintiff shall complete a Ca filing the complaint and serve side of this form.) In the e designation, that defendant s the plaintiff and all other par	se Management Track Designe a copy on all defendants. (Sevent that a defendant does neall, with its first appearance ties, a Case Management Tra	nation Form in all civil cases at the ties \$1:03 of the plan set forth on the react agree with the plaintiff regarding, submit to the clerk of court and serack Designation Form specifying the	me of everse g said				
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## Case 2:19-cv-01597 Document 1 Filed 04/12/19 Page 10 of 11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

### FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

### DESIGNATION FORM

(to be used by counsel or pro se plaintiff to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to the appropriate calendar)

Address of Plaintiff: 715 Eggleston Circle, Sharon Hill, PA 19079									
Address of Defendant: 800 Essington Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19153									
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Defendant's place of business									
RELATED CASE, IF ANY:									
Case Number: Judge: Date Terminated:									
Civil cases are deemed related when Yes is answered to any of the following questions:									
1. Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year  Yes  No X  previously terminated action in this court?									
2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit  Yes  No X									
3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier numbered case pending or within one year previously terminated action of this court?									
4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil rights  Yes  No X									
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is / is not related to any case now pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court except as noted above.									
DATE: 4/12/2019 ARK2484 / 91538  Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)									
Austriey-ui-Law / F10 Se 1 laining Muorney 1.2. 1 (5 approacte)									
CIVIL: (Place a √ in one category only)									
A. Federal Question Cases:  B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases:									
<ul> <li>Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts</li> <li>FELA</li> <li>Insurance Contract and Other Contracts</li> <li>Airplane Personal Injury</li> </ul>									
5. Patent 5. Motor Vehicle Personal Injury									
6. Labor-Management Relations   6. Other Personal Injury (Please specify):  7. Civil Rights  7. Products Liability									
8. Habeas Corpus 8. Products Liability – Asbestos									
10. Social Security Review Cases (Please specify):									
11. All other Federal Question Cases (Please specify):									
ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION  (The effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)									
I, Ari R. Karpf , counsel of record or pro se plaintiff, do hereby certify:									
Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, § 3(c) (2), that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of \$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs:									
Relief other than monetary damages is sought.									
DATE: 4/12/2019 ARK2484 / 91538									
Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)									

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

## **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet.

\*\*SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON MENT BAGE OF THIS FORM.\*\*

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purpose of initiating the civil d	locket sheet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO	RM.)	,				
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS					
MEITE, KANI AMADOU				SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO. d/b/a SOUTHWEST AIRLINES					
	EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF C.  Address, and Telephone Numbe.  P.C.; 3331 Street Roa	·) d, Two Greenwood		THE TRACT Attorneys (If Known)	(IN U.S. I ONDEMNAT	PLAINTIFF CASES O ION CASES, USE TH	,	·	
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	ON Title VII (42USC) Brief description of ca	2000); Section 198	1 (42ÚS	o not cite jurisdictional statu C1981) man Relations Act and th			Ordinance.		
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	O CHECK IF THIS UNDER RULE 2	IS A CLASS ACTION 3, F.R.Cv.P.	I D	EMAND \$		CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND:		omplaint 'No	t:
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